

12: Rivet--601
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Jívaro

The Jívaro hardly works at home two hours per day at the most. A skilled hunter and fisher, he passes his life outside. All his pride consists of being renowned for his dexterity and agility. All his efforts tend to maintain these precious qualities. From the age of seven on, the child practices handling the blowgun; to teach him the use of the throwing instrument, his parents make him little javelins from the stalk of the paja toquilla (Carludovica palmata). The little boys are lined up in two rows, a hoop of tree bark is thrown between them and each one tries to put his weapon through the center of the hoop. Thanks to this education, the Jíbaros can accomplish astonishing feats. A missionary saw them hit a target the size of a 5-franc piece with a lance at a distance of 20 meters (1)

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1. Voyage d'exploration d'un missionnaire dominicain, etc..., op. cit., page 143.

"As the weather kept fine, another excursion to the forest was planned. Kuashu, Himbikti and the small boy Katani, made up the party. Mihanda and We-suma left on some secret mission, the import of which we were to learn later, while Napi went off by himself to pay a few calls on his friends.

Our ramble through the jungle proved particularly interesting as it threw considerable light on the way children are brought up and the kind of rough education they are put through by their elders. Katani seemed quite a favourite with his grandfather, and the old man never lost an opportunity of instructing him in the use of his eyes or help develop his powers of simple deduction. [170]

We are all aware how easily some people get dizzy and lose their sense of the horizontal, but we do not realize how civilization has blurred our sense of direction. You will, however, soon find out if ever you happen to be dropped down in some virgin forest in the heart of nowhere. You will walk in circles, regardless of all nature's sign-posts which she displays for your benefit. An Indian teaches his sons to note the direction of streams, the inclination of the ground, the length of the shadows--anything, in fact, which makes him use his eyes and put two and two together so that they make four and not sixes or sevens. "

"Barely fifteen minutes after our start, some tapir's tracks excited Kuashu's curiosity. They were almost invisible to me, except when we followed them out into the open across a small sand-bar near the river. After what seemed like a cursory examination, Kuashu had an interesting story to tell. He pointed out to Katani how the tracks started wandering hither and thither till at a certain spot they took a straight line for the river's margin, at which point their character changed. From this it was deduced that the animal had been disturbed while feeding, and in all probability, frightened to such a degree that he had charged through the underbrush in a hurry. Himbikti's observant eye noticed a few bloodstains on the bushes, and where small branches had been broken off he pointed out a few hairs adhering to their jagged extremities.

The whole story in English was plain enough. The tapir had been walking quietly through the woods when a jaguar had pounced upon his back. Unable to rid himself of his assailant, the tapir had wisely bolted for the river, charging through the thicket hoping to scrape his adversary off his back by so doing. The jaguar was not going to forsake his prey so easily and held on tenaciously until the wily tapir had plunged into the river and then, of course, he had to let go, or drown, because his victim could remain [171] under water much longer than he could. Farther down the stream, we encountered the tracks of the disappointed jaguar, where he had swum ashore and taken himself off to the forest.

All the points of the lesson having been duly expounded, we sat down on the bank of the Upano in the shade to stretch our limbs. Some years previously, Kuashu must have had an encounter with a three-toed sloth near this very spot, for he began telling Katani of the event, pointing aloft to the sprawling limbs of a tall tree, and telling how he had ascended into the topmost branches and there slain the animal with his spear. This curious denizen of the forest called U-yushi by the Indians, will hang upside-down for hours at a time from the roof of the jungle, looking like a huge parasitic plant rooted to the spot. Kuashu told Katani that many years ago this animal was a man, a very old man called U-nupi, who belonged to an enemy tribe. He was married, of course, and his wife's name was U-nuchi, and he had a brother called Yungra. U-nupi. was such a lazy fellow that he would not even take the trouble to build a house, but lived up in the trees instead. In this secure position, he slept so much and hunted so seldom that in the end his children turned into animals."

"The Jivaros don't consider men to be glorified animals, but rather the reverse. All the animals, in their eyes, are degenerate human beings. Years ago, they say, all the inhabitants of the world were Shuaros, and gradually certain ones developed characteristics which we now associate with birds, animals, or fish. This consciousness of their relationship to the animal world is still very strong amongst them, so much so in the case of the sloth that he is not only attacked with the same ferocity they would summon against a human enemy, but they likewise preserve his head in a [172] shrunken state, as if it were that of some hostile tribesman.

Katani listened enthralled to every word of this Indian wisdom. In a few year's time he would be considered a man, for he would have taken part in the feast of Kusupani and drunk Miqua prepared from the bark of the beautiful flowering shrub (Datura arborea) which is administered with much ceremony whenever a boy reaches man's estate. It is a narcotic drink that is supposed to make men out of them, but in reality turns them into raving lunatics for a day or two. During this time, they see visions and talk with the great spirits who will aid them in their fight against future enemies. "

SOCIAL RELATIONS

87

862 her own infant. Weaning is not emphasized and may not take
[231] place until the child is six or seven years old. The mother
may accomplish this by putting a mildly hot pepper on her
nipples. If that has little effect, she has recourse to a hotter
variety.

854 The infant is wrapped loosely in a piece of cloth, which is
taken off and used, with water, to wipe the child clean of
excrement. The cloth is then washed and dried over a fire for
reuse. A baby's excessive crying may be interpreted as evi-
dence that it is "very hot," i.e., has a fever, and the mother
may bathe it in lukewarm water to cool the child sufficiently
so that it will fall asleep. Sometimes a mother, on being
awakened by a baby's crying, will scold and strike it in anger.

• 868 To teach the child to walk, the father lashes a stave railing
around the three open sides of the mother's bed to create a
simple "crib" which the child can grasp for support.

863 The attitude toward toilet training is quite relaxed. When a
toddler starts to defecate or urinate in the house, it is taken
outside; but it is not castigated verbally or otherwise. The
mother simply digs up the soiled portion of the dirt floor and
throws it out. The simplicity of this solution, together with
the fact that adults themselves may urinate on the floor at
night to avoid exposing themselves to possible attackers out-
side the house, helps one understand their attitude. Later, the

[861] child is simply told to go outside, but if it fails to do so, there
is no condemnatory admonition. Finally, however, if the
child is still failing to go out of the house by the time it is
about five years old, then the mother will speak her disap-
[861] proval. As a last resort, she may spank the child lightly with
a vine.

Children are encouraged to wash their hands and to bathe.

[861] They are told that if they do not wash their hands before
eating, their growth will be delayed and stunted. Girls are

told, in addition, that they must wash their hands before preparing beer or else the product will not be satisfactory. It is believed that if children are not taught to bathe at an early age, they will be afraid of cold water and their parents will find it necessary to drag them to the stream. Getting the child used to bathing is also seen as connected with teaching it, in the process, to swim well, a skill which is considered essential to survival because of the frequent necessity of crossing streams and rivers which are often dangerously swollen and rapid. 863

Children tend to be discouraged from playing, since it is felt that such behavior leads to a disinclination to work. Jest- ing or joking by children is similarly frowned upon, because it is believed to lead to lying in adult life. Nonetheless, children do often try to play until halted by their parents, who are likely to stop them more rapidly if children of both sexes are playing together. If a particular older child, who is visiting, has a reputation for playing and jesting, parents may tell their own offspring not to play with the visitor. 867

At this point, it seems appropriate to point out that one of the more significant features of Jivaro socialization may be the relative isolation of children from peers outside their own polygynous nuclear family, due to the extreme dispersion of households in the forest. This isolation seems likely to be conducive to a sense of alienation from the rest of the tribe, particularly when coupled with the traditional early morning lectures which fathers give to "make them be careful" in dealing with others beyond the household and which emphasize the deceitful and treacherous characteristics of other tribesmen. Adding to the child's sense of insecurity vis-à-vis the rest of the population is the frequent attribution of illness within the household to the bewitching activities of hostile shamans. Finally, the dispersion of the population in 866
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276 context of a four-day feast and dance, *uči auk* ("child swal-
 774 lowing"), in which approximately half a dozen such girls
 852 participate together. Prior to the event the girls observe die-
 778 tary restrictions for about a week, not eating the meat of any
 787 mammals or birds. The ceremonies take place in and near the
 787 house of the host, a father of one of the girls. On the first day
 the girls dance until midafternoon. Then they are given *tse-*
tsemā and are taken at nightfall to palm thatch lean-to's in the
 adjacent forest, where they will lie down to have visions and
 dreams of bountiful crops, chickens, and pigs. Meanwhile,
 the adults dance and drink in the house until dawn. The
 same procedure is repeated for three additional nights.

276 The most important use of hallucinogens in child-rearing,
 774 from the Jivaro point of view, is to assist a boy in seeing an
 778 *arutam* at a sacred waterfall, since his life is believed to de-
 787 pend upon it. This will be discussed in detail later (see pp.
 [86] 135-39). Of all a boy's childhood experiences, nothing is
 considered to compare in importance with the experience.

The power deriving from the acquired *arutam* soul is seen in
 Jivaro terms as an enculturating and socializing device, since
 its force is believed to promote almost all the valued aspects
 of character, including honesty, inclination to work, and in-
 telligence; as well as to increase the actual knowledge of the
 child.

462 Training in work and skills conforms to the adult sexual
 857 division of labor. A girl from about the age of four to six is
 • 868 not expected to do much more than care for the baby, if any,
 [854] while the mother is working in the garden or preparing beer
 in the house. She is instructed, among other things, to keep
 the infant from eating dirt and from being bitten by ants, and
 [356] to rock it in its hammock. She is also supposed to sweep the
 house floor at least daily and throw out the accumulation of
 refuse.

refuse. If there is no infant, this will probably be her only duty. 462 857 868

A girl approximately six years or older may have not only the above tasks, but also directly assists her mother in garden work of all kinds, including planting, weeding, and harvesting. When her mother is making pottery, she imitates her by making and firing miniature vessels and also may form and fire miniature dogs. No dolls in human form are produced, however. A boy who may be tempted to work with clay is discouraged by his father, who advises him not to touch it or else the boy's penis will one day stay soft and limp like a coil of clay. [323] [532] [826] [831]

A boy, when about four, begins to learn the art of blowgun hunting. His father gives him a small hollow reed less than a foot long and makes little darts. The child, who at that age tags along after his mother to the garden, uses it to shoot at butterflies. When he is about six, his father presents him with a real miniature blowgun and a dart quiver. Then, while his mother works in the garden, he wanders about, shooting at the hummingbirds coming to feed at the flowers of the manioc plants. Those that he kills, he brings to her to cook, which she does gravely. He is not allowed to eat them himself, it being believed that he cannot kill again if he does so. By approximately nine years of age, his skill normally has advanced to the stage that he is killing larger birds lurking in the trees around the garden. His father then takes him hunting and gives him his first formal instruction in killing game, and has him assist by carrying it home. In the house, the father encourages the development of other male skills by showing approval when the son attempts to make miniature baskets or model houses and rafts. 224 462 857 868 [262]

Post-puberty boys perform most of the tasks of their 000